



H.R. 3266 – Faster and Smarter Funding for First Responders

Commonly Asked Questions

(Q) Why do our First Responders need H.R. 3266?

(A) Recognizing the increased need for federal funding of our nation's first responders, Congress has increased their funding by over 20 billion since September 11, 2001. This represents an over 1000 percent increase. The current grant process, however, inherited by DHS from pre-9/11 programs, is cumbersome and convoluted -- resulting in lengthy delays and leaving funds trapped in the pipeline. Additionally, the bulk of homeland security grant funds currently are allocated based on political formulas involving population and guaranteed minimums for each state. Grants should be made based on intelligence, not politics, and need to get where they are needed more quickly – hence the “*Smarter and Faster Funding for First Responder*” bill.

(Q) What are the bill's main elements?

(A) There are four:

- (1) Preserve intact federal grant programs to assist first responders in fulfilling their traditional (pre-9/11) missions;**
- (2) Allocate homeland security grant assistance on the basis of where the risk of terrorist attack is greatest.**
- (3) Reduce the current cumbersome grant process from 12 steps to only 2.**
- (4) Permit multi-jurisdiction regions to apply for federal homeland security grant assistance;**

(Q) Are homeland security-related grants of all federal agencies covered by H.R. 3266?

(A) No. H.R. 3266 only covers homeland security grant programs administered by the Office of Domestic Preparedness (ODB) of the Department of Homeland Security.

(Q) Are grant programs of the Department of Justice and the Department of Health and Human Services covered?

(A) No. The legislation covers grants that specifically focus on preventing or responding to acts of terror provided that those grants are administered by the Department of Homeland Security.

(Q) Specifically, what first responder programs are excluded from H.R. 3266?

(A) H.R. 3266 does not cover the following first responder grant programs:

(1) The Fire Grant Program authorized by section 1703 of the Defense Authorization Act of 2001 (Public Law 106-398);

(2) the Emergency Management Performance Grant program and the Urban Search and Rescue Grants program authorized by title VI of the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. 5195 et seq.); the Departments of Veterans Affairs and Housing and Urban Development, and Independent Agencies Appropriations Act, 2000 (113 Stat. 1047 et seq.); and the Earthquake Hazards Reduction Act of 1977 (42 U.S.C. 7701 et seq.);

(3) the Local Law Enforcement Block Grant program of the Department of Justice;

(4) the Edward Byrne Memorial State and Local Law Enforcement Assistance Programs authorized by part E of title I of the Omnibus Crime Control and Safe Streets Act of 1968 (42 U.S.C. 3750 et seq.);

(5) COPS -- the Public Safety and Community Policing ('COPS ON THE BEAT') grant program authorized by part Q of title I of the Omnibus Crime Control and Safe Streets Act of 1968 (42 U.S.C. 3796dd et seq.); and

(6) Health and Human Services grant programs under the Public Health Service Act regarding preparedness for bioterrorism and other public health emergencies (including grants under sections 319C-1, 319C-2, and 319F), and the emergency response assistance program authorized by section 1412 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 1997 (50 U.S.C. 2312).

(Q) How does H.R. 3266 differ from existing grant allocation formulas?

(A) It allocates funds based on a comprehensive analysis of the risks we actually face, rather than on population-based formulas or guaranteed minimum levels of funding.

(Q) How will H.R. 3266 make it easier for applicants for homeland security grants?

(A) H.R. 3266 streamlines the grant application and approval process, replacing the present 12-step process with a straightforward 2-step process. It simply asks applicants to state their homeland security assistance needs, then taps the expertise of the Department's Directorate of Information Analysis and Infrastructure Protection to evaluate those needs in light of nationwide threat conditions.

(Q) What's the idea behind allowing "regions" to apply for homeland security grants?

(A) First, states will remain eligible to apply for these grants. We expect that most applications for homeland security grants will continue to come from states. H.R. 3266 recognizes, however, that there are non-state regions that have homeland security needs in common. They should be able to apply directly for homeland security grants. And, of course, it's important to remember that terrorists have no regard for state lines.

(Q) Will the threat-based allocation H.R. 3266 creates hurt rural states?

(A) No, there is absolutely no reason to think so. If anything, it puts rural areas on an equal footing with urban areas in applying for federal homeland security grants. An agricultural state, for example, could find itself subject to a heightened risk of terrorist attack targeting our nation's food supply. The current population-based political formulas and guaranteed minimums do not necessarily steer additional funding to help such states prepare to meet such a threat. The threat-based formula in H.R. 3266, by contrast, would.

(Q) How do we ensure that people come first under threat-based grant allocations?

(A) H.R. 3266 requires that the Department of Homeland Security give top priority to applications for grants to assist in preparing for or responding to threats that pose a significant loss of human life.